

The Public Domain Poems of Hart Crane

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Annunciations

The Pagan, 1-2 (April-May 1917), p. 11

The anxious milk-blood in the veins of the earth,
That strives long and quiet to sever the girth
Of greenery. . . . Below the roots, a quickening shiver
Aroused by some light that had sensed,—ere the shiver
Of the first moth's descent,—day's predestiny . . .
The sound of a dove's flight waved over the lawn. . .
The moans of travail in one dearest beside me. . .
Then high cries from great chasms of chaos outdrawn—
Hush! these things were all heard before dawn.

The Bathers

The Pagan, 2 (Dec. 1917), p. 19

Two ivory women by a milky sea;—
The dawn, a shell's pale lining restlessly
Shimmering over a black mountain-spear:—
A dreamer might see these, and wake to hear,
But there is no sound,—not even a bird-note;
Only simple ripples flaunt, and stroke, and float,—
Flat lily petals to the sea's white throat.

They say that Venus shot through foam to light,
But they are wrong. . . . Ere man was given sight
She came in such still water, and so nursed
In silence, beauty blessed and beauty cursed.

Black Tambourine

The Double Dealer, 1 (June, 1921), p. 232
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015056077897>

The interests of a black man in a cellar

Mark tardy judgment on the world's closed door.
Gnats toss in the shadow of a bottle,
And a roach spans a crevice in the floor.

Aesop, driven to pondering, found
Heaven with the tortoise and the hare;
Fox brush and sow ear top his grave
And mingling incantations on the air.

The black man, forlorn in the cellar,
Wanders in some mid-kingdom, dark, that lies,
Between his tambourine, stuck on the wall,
And, in Africa, a carcass quick with flies.

C-33

Bruno's Weekly, 3 (Sept. 23, 1916), p. 1008
<http://bluemountain.princeton.edu/bluemtn/cgi-bin/bluemtn?a=d&d=bmtnaaq19160923-01.2.14.3&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->

He has woven rose-vines
About the empty heart of night,
And vented his long mellowed wines
Of dreaming on the desert white
With searing sophistry.
And he tented with far truths he would form
The transient bosoms from the thorny tree.

O Materna! to enrich thy gold head
And wavering shoulders with a new light shed

From penitence, must needs bring pain,
And with it song of minor, broken strain.
But you who hear the lamp whisper thru night
Can trace paths tear-wet, and forget all blight.

Carmen De Boheme

Bruno's Bohemia, 1 (Mar., 1918), p. 2
<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/crane10.html>

Sinuously winding through the room
On smokey tongues of sweetened cigarettes, --

Plaintive yet proud the cello tones resume
The andante of smooth hopes and lost regrets.

Bright peacocks drink from flame-pots by the wall,
Just as absinthe-sipping women shiver through
With shimmering blue from the bowl in Circe's hall.
Their brown eyes blacken, and the blue drop hue.

The andante quivers with crescendo's start,
And dies on fire's birth in each man's heart.
The tapestry betrays a finger through
The slit, soft-pulling; -- -- -- and music follows cue.

There is a sweep, -- a shattering, -- a choir
Disquieting of barbarous fantasy.
The pulse is in the ears, the heart is higher,
And stretches up through mortal eyes to see.

Carmen! Akimbo arms and smouldering eyes; --
Carmen! Bestirring hope and lipping eyes; --
Carmen whirls, and music swirls and dips.
"Carmen!," comes awed from wine-hot lips.

Finale leaves in silence to replume
Bent wings, and Carmen with her flaunts through the gloom
Of whispering tapestry, brown with old fringe: --
The winners leave too, and the small lamps twinge.

Morning: and through the foggy city gate
A gypsy wagon wiggles, striving straight.
And some dream still of Carmen's mystic face, --
Yellow, pallid, like ancient lace.

Carrier Letter

The Pagan, 2-3 (Apr.-May 1918), p. 20

My hands have not touched water since your hands,—
No;—nor my lips freed laughter since 'farewell.'
And with the day, distance again expands
Between us, voiceless as an uncoiled shell.

Yet,—much follows, much endures . . . Trust birds alone:

A dove's wings clung about my heart last night
With surging gentleness; and the blue stone
Set in the tryst-ring has but worn more bright.

Chaplinesque

Gargoyle, (Dec. 1921)

We make our meek adjustments,
Contented with such random consolations
As the wind deposits
In slithered and too ample pockets.

For we can still love the world, who find
A famished kitten on the step, and know
Recesses for it from the fury of the street,
Or warm torn elbow coverts.

We will sidestep, and to the final smirk
Dally the doom of that inevitable thumb
That slowly chafes its puckered index toward us,
Facing the dull squint with what innocence
And what surprise!

And yet these fine collapses are not lies
More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane;
Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise.
We can evade you, and all else but the heart:
What blame to us if the heart live on.

The game enforces smirks; but we have seen
The moon in lonely alleys make
A grail of laughter of an empty ash can,
And through all sound of gaiety and quest
Have heard a kitten in the wilderness.

Echoes

The Pagan , 2 (Oct.-Nov. 1917), p. 39

1

Slivers of rain upon the pane,

Jade-green with sunlight, melt and flow
Upward again:—they leave no stain
Of storm or strain an hour ago.

2

Over the hill a last cloud dips,
And disappears, and I should go
Silently, now, but that your lips
Are warmer with a redder glow.

3

Fresh and fragile, your arms now
Are circles of cool roses,—so. . . .
In opal pools beneath your brow
I dream we quarreled long, long ago.

Fear

The Pagan, 1-2 (April-May 1917), p. 11
A Pagan anthology, 1918
<https://archive.org/details/pagananthologyco00cran>

The host, he says that all is well,
And the fire-wood glow is bright;
The food has a warm and tempting smell, —
But on the window licks the night.

Pile on the logs. . . . Give me your hands.
Friends! No, — it is not fright. . . .
But hold me . . . somewhere I heard demands. . . .
And on the window licks the night.

Forgetfulness

The Pagan, 3 (Aug.-Sept. 1918), p. 15
A Second Pagan Anthology, 1919
<https://archive.org/details/secondpaganantho00newy>

Forgetfulness is like a song
That, freed from beat and measure, wanders.
Forgetfulness is like a bird whose wings are reconciled,

Outspread and motionless, —
A bird that coasts the wind unwearyingly.

Forgetfulness is rain at night,
Or an old house in a forest, — or a child.
Forgetfulness is white, — white as a blasted tree,
And it may stun the sybil into prophecy,
Or bury the Gods.

I can remember much forgetfulness.

Garden Abstract

The Little Review, VII (Sept.-Dec. 1920), 78
http://modjourn.org//render.php?view=mjp_object&id=LittleReviewCollection

The apple on its bough is her desire—
Shining suspension, mimic of the sun.
The bough has caught her breath up, and her voice,
Dumbly articulate in the slant and rise
Of branch on branch above her, blurs her eyes.
She is prisoner of the tree and its green fingers.

And so she comes to dream herself the tree,
The wind possessing her—weaving her young veins,
Holding her to the sky and its quick blue,
Drowning the fever of her hands in sunlight.
She has no memory, nor fear, nor hope
Beyond the grass and shadows at her feet.

The Great Western Plains

Gargoyle, 3 (Aug., 1922), unpagged
<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/crane10.html>

The little voices of the prairie dogs
Are tireless . . .
They will give three hurrahs
Alike to stage, equestrian, and pullman,
And all unstingingly as to the moon.

And Fifi's bows and poodle ease
Whirl by them centred on the lap

Of Lottie Honeydew, movie queen,
Toward lawyers and Nevada.

And how much more they cannot see!
Alas, there is so little time,
The world moves by so fast these days!
Burrowing in silk is not their way --
And yet they know the tomahawk.

Indeed, old memories come back to life;
Pathetic yelps have sometimes greeted
Noses pressed against the glass.

The Hive

The Pagan, I (Mar. 1917), p. 36

Up the chasm-walls of my bleeding heart
Humanity pecks, claws, sobs, and climbs;
Up the inside, and over every part
Of the hive of the world that is my heart.

And of all the sowing, and all the tear-tendering,
And reaping, have mercy and love issued forth.
Mercy, white milk, and honey, gold love—
And I watch, and say, "These the anguish are worth."

In Shadow

The Little Review, (Dec. 1917), p. 50

Out in the late amber afternoon,
Confused among chrysanthemums,
Her parasol, a pale balloon,
Like a waiting moon, in shadow swims.

Her furtive lace and misty hair
Over the garden dial distill
The sunlight,—then withdrawing, wear
Again the shadows at her will.

Gently yet suddenly, the sheen
Of stars inwraps her parasol.

She hears my step behind the green
Twilight, stiller than shadows, fall.

“Come, it is too late,—too late
To risk alone the light's decline:
Nor has the evening long to wait,”—
But her own words are night's and mine.

Interior

The Modernist, 3 (Nov. 1919), p. 28
<http://www.theotherpages.org/poems/crane10.html>

It sheds a shy solemnity,
This lamp in our poor room.
O grey and gold amenity, --
Silence and gentle gloom!

Wide from the world, a stolen hour
We claim, and none may know
How love blooms like a tardy flower
Here in the day's after-glow.

And even should the world break in
With jealous threat and guile,
The world, at last, must bow and win
Our pity and a smile.

Legende

The Modernist, 3 (Nov. 1919), p. 28

The tossing loneliness of many nights
Rounds off my memory of her.
Like a shell surrendered to evening sands,
Yet called adrift again at every dawn,
She has become a pathos,—
Waif of the tides.

The sand and sea have had their way,
And moons of spring and autumn,—
All, save I,
And even my vision will be erased

As a cameo the waves claim again.

Locutions des Pierrots

The Double Dealer, 3 (May 1922), pp. 261-262
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.32000000682403>

I

Your eyes, those pools with soft rushes,
O prodigal and wholly dilatory lady,
Come now, when will they restore me
The orient moon of my dapper affections?

For imminent is that moment when,
Because of your perverse austerities,
My crisp soul will be flooded by a languor
Bland as the wide gaze of a Newfoundland.

Ah, madame! truly it's not right
When one isn't the real Gioconda,
To adaptate her methods and deportment
For snaring the poor world in a blue funk.

II

Ah! the divine infatuation
That I nurse for Cydalise
Now that she has fled the capture
Of my lunar sensibility!

True, I nibble at despondencies
Among the flowers of her domain
To the sole end of discovering
What is her unique propensity!

—Which is to be mine, you say?
Alas, you know how much I oppose
A stiff denial to postures
That seem too much impromptu.

III

Ah! without the moon, what white nights,
What nightmares rich with ingenuity!
Don't I see your white swans there?

Doesn't someone come to turn the knob?

And it's your fault that I'm this way.
That my conscience sees double,
And my heart fishes in troubled water
For Eve, Gioconda and Dalila.

Oh, by the infinite circumflex
Of the archbeam of my cross-legged labours,
Come now—appease me just a little
With the why-and-wherefore of Your Sex!

Modern Craft

The Pagan, 2 (Jan. 1918), p. 37

Though I have touched her flesh of moons,
Still she sits gestureless and mute,
Drowning cool pearls in alcohol.
O blameless shyness; — innocence dissolute!

She hazards jet; wears tiger-lilies; —
And bolts herself within a jewelled belt.
Too many palms have grazed her shoulders:
Surely she must have felt.

Ophelia had such eyes; but she
Even, sank in love and choked with flowers.
This burns and is not burnt My modern love were
Charred at a stake in younger times than ours.

My Grandmother's Love Letters

Dial 68:457 Ap '20
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.31210003010269>

There are no stars to-night
But those of memory.
Yet how much room for memory there is
In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough
For the letters of my mother's mother,

Elizabeth,
That have been pressed so long
Into a corner of the roof,
That they are brown and soft,
And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space
Steps must be gentle.
It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air.

And I ask myself:-

“Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes;
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again,
As though to her?”

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
Through much of what she would not understand;
And so I stumble, and the rain continues on the roof
With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

October-November

The Pagan, I (Nov. 1916), p. 33
A Pagan anthology, 1918
<https://archive.org/details/pagananthologyco00cran>

Indian-summer-sun
With crimson feathers whips away the mists, —
Dives through the filter of trellises
And gilds the silver on the blotched arbor-seats.

Now gold and purple scintillate
On trees that seem dancing
In delirium ;
Then the moon
In a mad orange flare
Floods the grape-hung night.

Pastorale

Dial 71:422 O '21
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.b2924815>

No more violets,
And the year
Boken into smoky panels.
What woods remember now
Her calls, her enthusiasms.

That ritual of sap and leaves
The sun drew out,
Ends in this latter muffled
Bronze and brass. The wind
Takes rein.

If, dusty, I bear
An image beyond this
Already fallen harvest,
I can only query, "Fool—
Have you remembered too long;

Or was there too little said
For ease or resolution—
Summer scarcely begun
And violets,
A few picked, the rest dead?"

A Persuasion

The Measure, 8 (Oct. 1921), p. 24
https://books.google.com/books?id=h7xNAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA174&dq=The+Measure+-+A+Journal+of+Poetry&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi7r_e-wKTUAhXF4CYKHXvcAb4Q6AEIKjAC#v=onepage&q=Hart%20Crane&f=false

If she waits late at night
Hearing the wind,
It is to gather kindnesses
No world can offer.

She has drawn her hands away.
The wind plays andantes

Of lost hopes and regrets,—
And yet is kind.

Below the wind,
Waiting for morning
The hills lie curved and blent
As now her heart and mind.

Porphyro in Akron

The Double Dealer, 2 (Aug-Sept. 1921), p. 53
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015056077897>

I
Greeting the dawn
A shift of rubber workers presses down
South Main.
With the stubbornness of muddy water
It dwindles at each cross-line
Until you feel the weight of many cars,
North-bound, and East and West,
Absorbing and conveying weariness,—
Rumbling over the hills.

Akron, "high place,"—
A bunch of smoking hills
Among rolling Ohio hills.

The dark-skinned Greeks grin at each other
In the streets and alleys.
The Greek grins and fights with the Swede,—
And the Fjords and the Aegean are remem-
bered.

The plough, the sword,
The trowel,—and the monkey wrench!
O City, your axles need not the oil of song.
I will whisper words to myself
And put them in my pockets.
I will go and pitch quoits with old men
In the dust of a road.

II

And some of them will be "Americans,"
Using the latest ice-box and buying Fords;
And others—

I remember one Sunday noon,
Harry and I, "the gentlemen,"—seated around
A table of raisin-jack and wine, our host
Setting down a glass and saying,—
"One month,—I go back rich.

I ride black horse . . . Have many sheep."
And his wife, like a mountain, coming in
With four tiny black-eyed girls around her
Twinkling like little Christmas trees.

And some Sunday fiddlers,
Roumanian business men,
Played ragtime and dances before the door,
And we overpayed them because we felt
like it.

III
Pull down the hotel counterpane
And hitch yourself up to your book.

"Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeleine's fair
breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and
boon..."

"Connais tu le pays ...?"

Your mother sang that in a stuffy parlour
One summer day in a little town
Where you had started to grow.
And you were outside as soon as you
Could get away from the company
To find the only rose on the bush
in the front yard.

But look up, Porphyro—your toes
Are ridiculously tapping

The spindles at the foot of the bed.

The stars are drowned in a slow rain,
And a hash of noises is slung up from the
street.

You ought, really, to try to sleep,
Even though, in this town, poetry's a
Bedroom occupation.

To Potapovitch (of the Ballet Russe)

The Modern School, 6 (March 1919), p. 80

Vault on the opal carpet of the sun,
Barbaric Prince Igor:—or, blind Pierrot,
Despair until the moon by tears be won;—
Or, Daphnis, move among the bees with Chloe.

Release,—dismiss the passion from your arms.
More real than life, the gestures you have spun
Haunt the plank stage with lingering alarms,
Though silent as your sandals, danced undone.

Postscript

The Pagan, 2-3 (Apr-May 1918) p. 20

Though now but marble are the marble urns,
Though fountains droop in waning light, and pain
Glitters on the edges of wet ferns,
I should not dare to let you in again.

Mine is a world foregone though not yet ended,—
An imagined garden grey with sundered boughs
And broken branches, wistful and unmended,
And mist that is more constant than your vows.

Praise for an Urn (In Memoriam E. N.)

Dial 72:606 Je '22
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000020203269>

It was a kind and northern face

That mingled in such exile guise
The everlasting eyes of Pierrot
And, of Gargantua, the laughter.

His thoughts, delivered to me
From the white coverlet and pillow,
I see now, were inheritances—
Delicate riders of the storm.

The slant moon on the slanting hill
Once moved us toward presentiments
Of what the dead keep, living still,
And such assessments of the soul

As, perched in the crematory lobby,
The insistent clock commented on,
Touching as well upon our praise
Of glories proper to the time.

Still, having in mind gold hair,
I cannot see that broken brow
And miss the dry sound of bees
Stretching across a lucid space.

Scatter these well meant idioms
Into the smoky spring that fills
The suburbs, where they will be lost.
They are no trophies of the sun.